

**THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHING  
COMMUNICATION  
STRATEGIES ON TERTIARY IRAQI EFL  
STUDENTS' FLUENCY AND  
SELF-CONFIDENCE**

**RAED LATIF UGLA AL-GEBURI**

**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA**

**2018**

**THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHING  
COMMUNICATION  
STRATEGIES ON TERTIARY IRAQI EFL  
STUDENTS' FLUENCY AND  
SELF-CONFIDENCE**

by

**RAED LATIF UGLA**

**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**March 2018**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

First of all, my heartfelt appreciation goes to my supervisor, Assistant Professors Dr. Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin I would like to express my gratitude to his invaluable guidance, comments, suggestions, and warm encouragement that helped me to overcome difficult times throughout my study. I would also like to thank my co-supervisor Professor Dr. Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan who supported me in times of trouble.

Special thanks are due to my father, mother, wife, uncle, aunt, brother, and sisters who have contributed to the successful completion of my study.

I take this opportunity with joy and fulfillment to thank Mr. Mohammad Najim Abdullah who has helped me to implement the field study and assisted me with data analysis.

I am also so appreciative to the students who participated many times in the study especially in the interviews.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Mohammad Yahiya who willingly proofread my English writing and who made an enormous contribution to this thesis by encouraging me with constructive comments.

Furthermore, many thanks to all teachers and staff members in the School of Educational Studies/ Universiti Sains Malaysia for their help and support.

By completing this thesis, I have reached my goal and have been able to move on to a promising new stage in my life. I would like to dedicate my work to all the people who have helped me on my study.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiv
ABSTRAK.....	xv
ABSTRACT.....	xvii

## CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the Study.....	1
1.3 The Education System in Iraq.....	5
1.3.1 The Syllabuses of English in Iraq.....	7
1.4 Statement of the Problem.....	8
1.5 Objectives of the Study.....	13
1.6 Research Questions.....	14
1.7 Research Hypothesis.....	14
1.8 Significance of the Study.....	15
1.9 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study.....	16
1.10 Definitions of Basic Terms.....	19
1.10.1 The Communication Strategies (CSs).....	19
1.10.2 Taught Communication Strategies.....	20
1.10.2(a) Interactional CSs.....	20
1.10.2(b) Direct CSs.....	21

1.10.2(c) Indirect CSs.....	21
1.10.2(d) Avoidance Strategies.....	22
1.10.2(e) Non-Linguistics Strategies.....	22
1.10.3 Non-Taught Communication Strategies.....	23
1.10.4 Fluency.....	23
1.10.5 Self-Confidence.....	24
1.11 Summary.....	24

## **CHAPTER 2- REVIEW OF LITRATURE**

2.1 Introduction.....	25
2.2 A Brief History of CSs .....	25
2.3 Definition of CSs.....	27
2.4 Theoretical Background.....	29
2.4.1 Communicative Competence Theory.....	29
2.4.2. Models of Communicative Competence.....	32
2.4.2(a) Model of Canale and Swain (1980, 1983).....	33
2.4.2(b) Faerch and Kasper’s Model of Speech Production (1983).....	37
2.4.2(c) Model of Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995).....	39
2.5 Summary of the Communicative Competence Models.....	41
2.6 Conceptual Framework of the Study.....	42
2.7 Perspectives for Conceptualization of CSs.....	44
2.7.1 Interactional Perspective.....	44
2.7.2 Psycholinguistic Perspective.....	46
2.8 The relationship between Proficiency Level and CSs .....	48
2.9 Fluency, Self-Confidence, and Communication Strategies.....	51

2.9 Communication Strategies, Fluency, and Self-Confidence.....	51
2.10 Previous Studies on Teaching CSs.....	58
2.10.1 Studies in Favor of Teaching CSs.....	58
2.10.2 Studies Against the Teachability of CSs.....	65
2.11 Summary of Studies on Communication Strategies.....	65
2.12 Studies on CSs, Fluency, and Self-Confidence in the Arab Region.....	66
2.13 Methods of Teaching CSs.....	74
2.14 Taxonomies of CSs Adopted in this Study.....	77
2.14.1 Dörnyei and Scott’s Taxonomy (1995a, 1995b).....	77
2.14.2 Farrahi’s Taxonomy (2011).....	80
2.15 Taxonomies of CSs.....	83
2.16 Summary .....	88

### **CHAPTER 3- RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.1 Introduction.....	89
3.2 Research Design.....	91
3.3 Sampling Procedures.....	92
3.4 Research Instruments. ....	96
3.5 Pilot Study.....	99
3.6 Instrument Reliability.....	104
3.7 Instrument Validity .....	104
3.8 The Communication Strategies Adopted for this Study.....	106
3.9 The Instruction of CSs.....	109
3.10 Instructional Guide for Teaching CSs.....	113
3.11 Description of CSs Used in this Study.....	125

3.12 Data Collection.....	127
3.12.1 Data Collection before the Instruction of CSs.....	127
3.12.2 Data Collection after the Instruction of CSs.....	129
3.13 Data Analysis.....	132
3.13.1 Analysis of Data Related to Question 1.....	132
3.13.2 Analysis of Data Related to Question 2.....	134
3.13.3 Analysis of Data Related to Question 3.....	137
3.13.4 Analysis of Data Related to Question 4.....	138
3.14 Ethical Considerations.....	138
3.15 Summary.....	139

## **CHAPTER 4- DATA ANALYSIS**

4.1 Introduction.....	140
4.2 Background of the Participants.....	141
4.3 Analysis of Data from the Topic Description.....	142
4.3.1 Analysis of Data before Instruction of CSs.....	142
4.3.2 Analysis of Data after the Instruction of CSs.....	149
4.3.3 Non-Taught CSs Used by the Low Proficient Participants before and after the Instruction of CSs.....	155
4.3.4 Non-Taught CSs Used by the Intermediate Proficient Participants before and after the Instruction of CSs.....	158
4.3.5 Non-Taught CSs Used by the High Proficient Participants before and after the Instruction of CSs.....	160
4.4 Analysis of Data from the Storytelling.....	162
4.4.1 Analysis of Data before the Instruction of CSs.....	162



4.4.2 Analysis of Data after the Instruction of CSs.....	168
4.4.3 Taught CSs Used by the Low Proficient Participants before and after the Instruction of CSs.....	175
4.4.4 Taught CSs used by the Intermediate Proficient Participants before and after the Instruction of CSs.....	177
4.4.5 Taught CSs Used by the High Proficient Participants before and after the Instruction of CSs.....	179
4.5 Analysis of Data from the IELTS Speaking Test.....	181
4.5.1 Low Participants' Fluency before and after the Instruction of CSs.....	182
4.5.2 Intermediate Proficient Participants' Fluency before and after the Instruction of CSs.....	183
4.5.3 High Proficient Participants' Fluency before and after the Instruction of CSs.....	184
4.6 Analysis of Data from the Self-Confidence Questionnaire.....	185
4.7 Summary.....	189

## **CHAPTER 5- DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

5.1 Introduction.....	190
5.2 The Influence of the Instruction of CSs on the Participants' Use of Non- Taught CSs.....	190
5.2.1 The Non-Taught CSs Used by the Low, Intermediate, and High Proficient Participants.....	191
5.3 The Influence of the Instruction of CSs on the Participants' use of Taught CSs.....	195

5.3.1 The Taught CSs Used by the Low, Intermediate, and High Proficient Participants.....	196
5.4 The Influence of the Instruction of CSs on the Participants' Fluency.....	204
5.5 The Influence of the Instruction of CSs on the Participants' Self-Confidence...	206
5.5.1 The Findings of the Self-Confidence Questionnaire.....	206
5.6 Summary of the Findings in Relation to the Communicative Competence Theory.....	208
5.7 Implications of this Study.....	211
5.7.1 Implications for Iraqi Syllabus Designers.....	211
5.7.2 Implications for Tertiary Iraqi EFL Teachers.....	213
5.7.3 Implications for Future Research in CSs.....	214
5.8 Contributions of the Present Study.....	220
5.9 Recommendations for Future Studies.....	222
5.10 Conclusion.....	224
5.11 Summary.....	226
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>227</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>244</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

	<b>Page</b>
Table 1.1 The education system under the control of the Ministry of Education....	6
Table 1.2 The education system under the control of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.....	6
Table 2.1 Dörnyei and Scott's taxonomy of CSs (1995a, 1995b).....	79
Table 2.2 Farrahi's Taxonomy of CSs (2011).....	82
Table 3.1 An overview of the participants' background.....	92
Table 3.2 The IELTS Test overall band scores for speaking.....	94
Table 3.3 An overview of the participants' speaking proficiency level.....	95
Table 3.4 The self-confidence questionnaire items and its factors.....	99
Table 3.5 An overview of the participants' background who participated in the pilot study.....	100
Table 3.6 An overview of the participants' speaking proficiency level who participated in the pilot study.....	101
Table 3.7 Background of the experts.....	105
Table 3.8 Instructional guide for teaching CSs to tertiary Iraqi EFL students...	115
Table 3.9 An overview of the research questions and the instruments used in this study.....	131
Table 3.10 Inter-coder reliability coefficient of oral test before and after the instruction of CSs.....	134
Table 3.11 Inter-coder reliability coefficient of speaking task before and after the instruction of CSs.....	136
Table 3.12 Test protocol.....	137

Table 4.1	Backgrounds of the Participants.....	141
Table 4.2	Frequency of non-taught CSs used by the low proficient participants before instruction of CSs.....	144
Table 4.3	Frequency of non-taught CSs used by the intermediate proficient participants before the instruction of CSs.....	145
Table 4.4	Frequency of non-taught CSs used by the high proficient participants before the instruction of CSs.....	146
Table 4.5	Frequency of non-taught CSs used by the low proficient participants after the instruction of CSs.....	151
Table 4.6	Frequency of non-taught CSs used by the intermediate proficient participants after the instruction of CSs.....	152
Table 4.7	Frequency of non-taught CSs used by the high proficient participants after the instruction of CSs.....	153
Table 4.8	Comparison of frequencies of non-taught CSs used by low proficient participants before and after the instruction of CSs.....	157
Table 4.9	Comparison of frequencies of non-taught CSs used by intermediate proficient participants before and after the instruction of CSs.....	159
Table 4.10	Comparison of frequencies of non-taught CSs used by high proficient participants before and after the instruction of CSs.....	161
Table 4.11	Frequency of taught CSs used by the low proficient participants before the instruction of CSs.....	164
Table 4.12	Frequency of taught CSs used by the intermediate proficient participants before the instruction of CSs.....	165
Table 4.13	Frequency of taught CSs used by the high proficient participants before the instruction of CSs.....	166

Table 4.14	Frequency of taught CSs used by the low proficient participants after the instruction of CSs.....	170
Table 4.15	Frequency of taught CSs used by the intermediate proficient participants after the instruction of CSs.....	172
Table 4.16	Frequency of taught CSs used by the high proficient participants after the instruction of CSs.....	173
Table 4.17	Comparison of frequencies of taught CSs used by low proficient participants before and after the instruction of CSs.....	176
Table 4.18	Comparison of frequencies of taught CSs used by intermediate proficient participants before and after the instruction of CSs.....	178
Table 4.19	Comparison of frequencies of the taught CSs used by high proficient participants before and after the instruction of CSs.....	180
Table 4.20	Descriptive statistics of fluency of low proficient participants before and after the Instruction of CSs.....	182
Table 4.21	Descriptive statistics of fluency of intermediate proficient participants before and after the instruction of CSs.....	183
Table 4.22	Descriptive statistics of fluency of high proficient participants before and after the instruction of CSs.....	184
Table 4.23	Paired samples statistics for low proficient participants.....	186
Table 4.24	Paired samples test for low proficient participants.....	186
Table 4.25	Paired samples statistics for intermediate proficient participants.....	187
Table 4.26	Paired samples test for intermediate proficient participants.....	187
Table 4.27	Paired samples statistics for high proficient participants.....	188
Table 4.28	Paired samples test for high proficient participants.....	188
Table 5.1	Description of the suggested taxonomy of CSs.....	218

## LIST OF FIGURES

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 2.1 Canale and Swain’s model of communicative competence.....	34
Figure 2.2 A general model of speech production.....	37
Figure 2.3 Schematic representation of communicative competence.....	40
Figure 2.4 Conceptual framework of the study.....	43
Figure 3.1 Flowchart of the Study.....	90
Figure 3.2 Taxonomy of communication strategies for the instruction of CSs..	107
Figure 4.1 An example of recorded data from oral test (topic description).....	143
Figure 4.2 An example of recorded data from speaking task (storytelling).....	163
Figure 5.1 Suggested Taxonomy of Communication Strategies.....	216

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CS	Communication Strategy
CSs	Communication Strategies
EFL	English as Foreign Language
ESL	English as Second Language
FL	Foreign Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
IV	Independent Variable
DV	Dependent Variable
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication

**PENGARUH STRATEGI KOMUNIKASI PENGAJARAN KE ATAS  
KEFASIHAN DAN KEYAKINAN DIRI PELAJAR EFL PENDIDIKAN  
TINGGI IRAQ**

**ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini mengkaji pengaruh pengajaran strategi komunikasi terhadap kefasihan dan keyakinan diri pelajar EFL pendidikan tinggi Iraq. Untuk tujuan kajian ini, 50 pelajar EFL pendidikan tinggi dari Iraq telah dipilih dan dibahagikan kepada tiga tahap kemahiran (rendah, sederhana, tinggi). Dalam kajian ini, penyelidik telah menggunakan reka bentuk satu kumpulan kuasi eksperimen dengan menggunakan ujian pra dan pos. Semua pelajar ini telah menerima pelajaran latihan strategi komunikasi selama 10 minggu. Pelajaran ini adalah berdasarkan pengajaran 10 jenis strategi komunikasi yang telah dipilih dari taksonomi Dörnyei dan Scotts' (1995a, 1995b) dan Farrahi's (2011). Strategi ini telah diajar mengikut panduan pengajaran yang dicadangkan untuk kajian ini. Panduan ini didasarkan pada penyediaan definisi dan contoh untuk strategi komunikasi yang dipilih. Ia mengikuti beberapa prosedur yang dicadangkan oleh Dörnyei (1995). Langkah ujian pra dan pos telah digunakan untuk mengetahui pengaruh pengajaran strategi komunikasi dalam penggunaan strategi komunikasi yang diajar atau yang tidak diajar, kelancaran dan keyakinan diri. Pengaruh instruksi telah dinilai oleh dua jenis pengumpulan data yang bersifat kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Data kualitatif telah dikumpul dengan menggunakan ujian lisan (deskripsi topik) dan bantuan percakapan (bercerita). Data kuantitatif dikumpulkan melalui ujian Pertuturan IELTS dan kaji selidik keyakinan diri.. Data-data ini telah dianalisis secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Penemuan kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa pelajar telah menggunakan strategi komunikasi yang diajar



atau yang tidak diajar secara berbagai sebelum dan selepas pengajaran strategi komunikasi. Selepas pengajaran strategi komunikasi, peserta yang rendah, sederhana dan tinggi telah menunjukkan peningkatan dalam penggunaan beberapa strategi komunikasi yang tidak diajar. Mereka juga telah meningkatkan penggunaan kebanyakan strategi komunikasi yang diajar. Peningkatan penggunaannya boleh dikaitkan dengan pengajaran strategi komunikasi. Mengenai kelancaran peserta, hasil ujian pos pertuturan IELTS telah mengesahkan bahawa kefasihan peserta telah meningkat setelah pengajaran strategi komunikasi. Hasil daripada soal selidik keyakinan diri selepas pengajaran strategi komunikasi menunjukkan keyakinan diri peserta lemah tidak bertambah. Sebaliknya, peserta sederhana dan tinggi telah meningkatkan keyakinan diri mereka selepas pengajaran strategi komunikasi. Kajian ini menyokong pengajaran strategi komunikasi. Penemuan kajian ini mempunyai implikasi untuk pereka silibus Iraq, guru-guru EFL pendidikan tinggi dan penyelidikan masa depan dalam strategi komunikasi.

**THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHING COMMUNICATION  
STRATEGIES ON TERTIARY IRAQI EFL STUDENTS' FLUENCY AND  
SELF-CONFIDENCE**

**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the influence of communication strategy instruction on tertiary Iraqi EFL students' fluency and self-confidence. For the purpose of this study, 50 tertiary Iraqi EFL students were selected and divided into three proficiency levels (low, intermediate, high). In this study, the researcher used quasi-experimental one group pretest-posttest design. All the students received 10-week communication strategies training lessons. These lessons were based on teaching 10 kinds of communication strategies which were selected from taxonomies of Dörnyei and Scotts' (1995a, 1995b) and Farrahi's (2011). These strategies were taught according to the instructional guide which was proposed for this study. This guide was based on providing valuable definitions and examples for the selected communication strategies. It followed some procedures that were proposed by Dörnyei (1995). Pretest and posttest procedures were used to find out the influence of the instruction of communication strategies on Iraqi EFL students' use of non-taught/ taught communication strategies, fluency, and self-confidence. The influence of the instruction was assessed by two types of data collection which are qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data were collected using the oral test (topic description) and speaking task (storytelling). On the other hand, the quantitative data were collected using IELTS Speaking Test and self-confidence questionnaire. These data were respectively analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings of this study revealed that the participants were varied in the use of non-taught/ taught

communication strategies before and after the instruction of communication strategies. After the instruction of communication strategies, low, intermediate, and high proficient participants increased their use of some of the non-taught communication strategies. They also increased their use of most of the taught communication strategies. This increase in their use could be attributed to the instruction of communication strategies. Regarding the participants' fluency, the results of the post-IELTS Speaking Test confirmed that the participants' fluency was improved after the instruction of communication strategies. The results of the self-confidence questionnaire after the instruction of communication strategies showed that the low proficient participants' self-confidence did not improved after the instruction of communication strategies. On the other hand, the intermediate and high proficient participants improved their self-confidence after the instruction of communication strategies. This study supported the teachability of communication strategies. The findings of the present study have implications for Iraqi syllabus designers, tertiary Iraqi EFL teachers, and future research in communication strategies.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, research hypothesis, limitations of the study, and definitions of basic terms (the communication strategies, the communicative competence, and the strategic competence).

### **1.2 Background of the Study**

Nowadays, English has become the first international language. The focus becomes more on the improvement of learner's ability to speak English and communicate effectively. Since the non-native speakers of English cannot master all words, idioms, and structures of the target language, they face many breakdowns and difficulties while speaking a foreign language (Ugla et al., 2013). Speaking a foreign language is not an easy task and needs a long time to develop. In this case, English as foreign language (EFL) learners need a means by which, they could solve their problems during speaking task in a foreign language (FL). To compensate for these breakdowns and difficulties, EFL learners have to develop their communicative competence.

According to Canale and Swain (1988), communicative competence consists of four major elements, which are grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistics, and strategic competence. Strategic competence involves verbal and non-verbal strategies

(Canale and Swain, 1988). Communication strategies (CSs) are known as strategies by which EFL learners overcome breakdowns during their speaking task. Communication strategies enable learners to keep their speaking open and provide them with much more inputs and opportunities to check and verify their assumptions (Mariani, 1994). In this respect, Rabab'ah (2004) states that:

Language learners attempt to solve their communication problems when they lack adequate resources in the target language by resorting to CSs. Most researchers agree that CSs are used to bridge the gap that exists between the non-native speakers' linguistic competence in the target language and their communicative needs (p.148).

Communication strategies are developmental and learners need opportunities to practice them during conversations in and outside of class. They could be learnt gradually over time and learners may take time to learn how to successfully use CSs in their oral communication in the target language. These strategies help students overcome difficulties in oral communication and improve their communicative competence by enhancing strategic competence (Khairi et al., 2010).

Varadi, (1973) is considered the first who introduces the taxonomy of CSs. His taxonomy consists of replacement of meaning strategies related to the message adjustment and reduction strategies. Subsequently, other researchers introduce many taxonomies of CSs such as Taron (1977), Kellerman et al. (1980), Færch, and Kasper (1983) Corder (1983) Poullisse (1983) Bialystok (1983, 1990), Paribakht (1985), Willems (1987), Yarmohammadi and Seif (1992), Dörnyei and Scott (1995), Kocoglu (1997), Rabab'ah (2001), Nakatani (2005), and Farrahi (2011) Taron's taxonomy (1977) is considered very important taxonomy since most taxonomies

which developed later, were based on it. The Nijmegen Group's taxonomy (1980) consists of conceptual and linguistic strategies. Farch and Kasper's taxonomy (1983) is divided into reduction strategies and achievement strategies. Corder's taxonomy (1983) consists of message adjustment strategies and the resources strategies. Poullisse's taxonomy (1983) is represented in three types of strategies, the substitution strategies, substitution plus strategies, and the last one was the reconceptualization strategies. Additionally, Bialystok's taxonomy (1983) is divided into the first language (L1)- based strategies, second language (L2)- based strategies, and the paralinguistic strategies. In 1990, Bialystok has developed a new concept of CSs classification. She classifies CSs into two main strategies, the analysis- based strategies and the control- based strategies. Paribakht's taxonomy (1985) is based on the four approaches, the linguistic approach, the contextual approach, the conceptual approach, and the mime. Willems' taxonomy (1987) falls into reduction strategies and achievement strategies. And then, the taxonomy of Yarmohammadi and Seif (1992) includes two main categories of CSs namely: reduction and achievement strategies. Dörnyei and Scott's taxonomy (1995) consists of direct strategies, indirect strategies, and interactional strategies. Kocoglu's taxonomy (1997) consists of seven main strategies (reduction, generalization, word-coinage, cooperative, paraphrase, repair, and repeat strategies). Rabab'ah's taxonomy (2001) is based on two types of strategies; L1-based strategies (L1 represented the Arabic language) and L2- based strategies (L2 represented the English language). Nakatani's taxonomy (2005) is divided into four categories of oral CSs, modification interaction, modification output, time-gaining strategies, and maintenance strategies. Finally, Farrahi's taxonomy (2011) consists of two main types of CSs. The first CSs are linguistic strategies, which are classified into paraphrase and word for word translation,

avoidance, and appeal for help. The second CSs are non-linguistics strategies, which are classified into the use of sounds, use of body gestures, use of pictures paintings or drawings, and use of at hand objects facilities or equipment. The communication strategies vary among these taxonomies. Some researchers have used the same strategies, which have been stated in other taxonomies while other taxonomies have developed new strategies, which did not exist before. These taxonomies are explained in details in chapter two.

Language proficiency level is one of the factors that affects the use of CSs. Previous researchers such as Ellis (1984), Poullisse and Schils (1989), Cohen et al. (1998), and Nakatani (2006) do not agree about the relationship between language proficiency level and the use of CSs. Cohen and Macaro (2007) suggest that the variation of opinion among many researchers might be related to the ways they evaluate the use of CSs. Earlier studies suggest that high proficiency learners able to select the appropriate and effective CSs better than those of low proficiency level. According to Faucette (2001), CSs could be the most important means for low proficient learners to have the opportunity to receive more language inputs in conversation task. According to Cohen et al. (1998), learners' proficiency level might greatly affect the instruction of CSs.

### **1.3 The Education System in Iraq**

The modern Iraqi educational system has been established in 1921. In the early 1970s, it has become a public education and free at all levels and compulsory at the primary level. Two ministries organize education in Iraq: Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the education of pre-schools, primary schools, intermediate schools, institutes of teachers, secondary schools, and vocational education (see Table 1.1). The ministry is responsible for setting educational policy from primary to secondary education in order to achieve national development goals and plans, while the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is responsible for higher education at the universities and the different institutes (see Table 1.2).

The primary education consists of six grades and continues six years of study (Geopolicity, 2009). The child is registered six years old. The basic materials studied Arabic language, English language, Religion, Sciences, Mathematics, Art Education, Athletic Education, and Musical Education. In 2013, English language has been taught from the first primary stage and continues to postgraduate level of study (doctorate studies). The intermediate education consists of three stages (first, second and third). Institutes of teachers could be joined after finishing the intermediate education. They consist of five years of study. Secondary education starts from the fourth preparatory grade and consists of three stages (fourth, fifth, sixth). In the fourth grade, students choose either scientific or literary study and grow subjects where it is expanding science, mathematics and English (UNESCO, 2003).



Table 1.1 The education system under the control of the Ministry of Education

Level of study	Age	Duration of Study
Pre-school	4 years	4 years
Primary school	6 years	6 years
Intermediate school	13 years	3 years
Institute of teachers	13 years	5 years
Secondary school (academic or vocational)	16 years	3 years

The higher education is available in the universities and institutes. The study at all universities is four years after secondary school. The study at colleges of medicine is six years after secondary school, while the study at dentist and pharmacy colleges is five years (see Table 1.2). The study in all institutes is two years after secondary school. English language is taught at all levels and kinds of higher and postgraduate level of education.

Table 1.2 The education system under the control of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Level of study	Age	Duration of study
University	18 years	4 – 6 years
Institute	18 years	2 years
Postgraduate		
• Master degree	23 – 45 years	2 years
• Doctorate degree	25 – 50 years	3 years

### 1.3.1 The Syllabuses of English in Iraq

The syllabuses of English focus more on teaching English grammar, literature, and reading to Iraqi EFL students, while speaking and oral communication are given less or no attention. According to Abdul-Kareem (2009), syllabuses in Iraq focus more on reading and writing, but they give little attention to speaking and listening. Most of the syllabuses they use are old, which they do not lead to improve student's ability to communicate orally in English. In examining samples of EFL textbooks *Person to Person* (student book1/2) (Richards et al., 2005), *Better English Pronunciation* (O' Connor, 1980), *Developing skills* (Alexander, 1967), which widely used textbooks in many departments of English in Iraq, it is found that there is no clear uniform textbook for teaching CSs. These textbooks focus more on dialogues pair-work speaking practice, the use of materials that presents English as it is really spoken, train the students in the four skills of understanding, speaking, reading, and writing, improving Iraqi EFL spoken skills, their production of the spoken target language, enabling Iraqi EFL students to speak well, and communicating more fluently in English. But there is no evidence that these books enable Iraqi EFL students to deal with the speaking difficulties and the problems that may face in the target language. They never contain any practical courses on how to deal with such speaking problems or difficulties that may be faced by Iraqi EFL students. These books have not included direct information or practical tips about of CSs. Some CSs such as asking for confirmation, asking for clarification, omission, and paraphrase are used in certain books entitled *Person to Person* (student book1/2) (Richards et al., 2005) and *The Study of Language* (Yule, 2006), but there is no specific strategic focus at all.

Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of the present study, if they are found to be in favour of CSs instruction, should encourage curriculum designers to include CSs similar to those used in the present study, whose ultimate goal is to develop Iraqi EFL students' strategy use which finally leads to improve their oral communication in the target language.

#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

Oral communication problems could be a considerable challenge to communicate effectively by Iraqi EFL learners. Iraqi EFL learners still face difficulties in communicating orally in the target language (Basim, 2007; Al Mudhaffar, 2012; Keong et al., 2015). Although Iraqi EFL students have spent years in developing their knowledge of vocabulary and structure, they often experience disappointment of not being able to participate effectively in the FL communications. They have lacked communication skills (Sagban, 2005). As in other Arab countries, Iraqi EFL students use English only in their lessons of English. This means that there is no other opportunity to use English or interact with foreigners outside these lessons. Rabab'ah (2003) argues that there are no or limited opportunities for Arab learners to learn English through natural interactions, since they only face English speakers who come to their countries as tourists. Due to the years of academic experience, it has been noticed that most of Iraqi EFL university students face oral communication breakdowns and difficulties when they communicate orally in English language. All these difficulties could be due to lack of their communication ability.

Although Iraqi EFL students use some CSs in their oral communication (Ugla, et al., 2013), they cannot identify the appropriate CSs. This problem might be related to their lack of knowledge regarding the importance of CSs in oral communication and how to use them in real oral communication task. According to Khairi et al. (2010), making Iraqi EFL learners aware of the importance of CSs, leads to the greater use of CSs in their oral communication. By making the learners more conscious of CSs that already exist in their repertoire, this could be beneficial and make them realize that these strategies could actually work in the appropriate situation (Dörnyei, 1995).

Iraqi EFL students have problems to be fluent in English, and they lack fluent communication while using the target language (Hasan & Hamza, 2009). Iraqi EFL students lack fluency in English. According to Dörnyei (1995) teaching topic avoidance, message replacement, and use of fillers strategies could improve students' fluency. These strategies help the learners to avoid some situations consider problematic in oral communication and at the same time keep their speaking going on without breakdowns. The learners use these kinds of strategies to veer away from the unknown topics and avoid finding solutions for them (Huang, 2010).

Iraqi EFL students also lack self-confidence when speaking in the target language (Yaseen, 2016). Training CSs may enhance the students' self-confidence when they communicate in the target language (Manchon, 2000). Grenfell and Harris (1999, cited in Gallagher, 2001) state that strategy training could increase learners' self-confidence and autonomy in the target language. The explicit teaching of CSs

might enable students to use them successfully and to build up their confidence in L2 communication (Wood, 2011).

According to Dörnyei (1995) some people can use a very limited number of the target language words to communicate effectively. Actually they use their hands, gestures, imitate some sounds, describe things, use some words from their mother tongue languages, and create new words that never exist in the target language. This means that they use verbal and non-verbal CSs. There is, however, need to develop Iraqi EFL students strategy use, by which they can use verbal and non-verbal CSs to overcome the oral communication breakdowns in English.

The teachability of CSs was a controversial issue in the past decades (Dörnyei, 1995; Rabab'ah, 2015). Many researchers proposed different types of CSs training such as Rossiter (2003), Wen (2004), Nakatani (2005), Le (2006), Lin (2007), Hmaid (2014), Majd (2014), and Rabab'ah (2015). These studies have been varied according to the kinds of CSs used, the materials used in teaching CSs, and finally the background of the students or the learners who are involved in these studies. Teaching CSs to the EFL learners enables them to solve their problems and breakdowns they may face during an oral communication task in a foreign language and to select appropriate CSs which best fit the situation while speaking in English. Teaching CSs enables students to cope with breakdowns they face while communicating in English (Ogane, 1998). Due to the researcher's experience and the needs to find out a means by which Iraqi EFL learner can overcome their oral

communication problems in English, there is a need to teach Iraqi EFL learners some CSs which may help them to solve such problems in English.

There is no agreement among many researchers about the effect of proficiency level on the strategy use (see Teng, 2011; Rabab'ah, 2001; Nakatani, 2006; Metcalfe & Noom-Ura, 2013; Uztosun & Erten, 2014). Although those researchers have identified the effects of proficiency level on strategy use, it appears that there have been no or limited studies that studied the relationship between instruction of CSs, speaking proficiency level, and strategy use. Furthermore, the learners' proficiency level is one of the main factors that influence CSs use, the researcher tries to investigate the relationship between instruction of CSs, proficiency level, and strategy use.

For these reasons, there appears to be no information on teaching CSs to high, intermediate, and low proficient Iraqi EFL students, the researcher intends to find out if it is important to teach some selected CSs to Iraqi EFL students with three speaking proficiency levels to enable them to compensate for their lack of strategy use and develop their ability in selecting and using the appropriate CSs. Such instruction of CSs could include new materials for teaching CSs. These strategies have been divided into verbal and non-verbal CSs, which deal with the difficulties and breakdowns that Iraqi EFL students face in their oral communication in English. The explicit teaching of CSs enhances Iraqi EFL students' effective ability to communicate in the target language, improves their conversation, and it has a long lasting impact on the communication skills of English language students (Khalil,

2015). It is also hoped that teaching CSs could improve Iraqi EFL students' fluency and self-confidence in the target language, which finally leads to improve their oral communication in the target language. Many researchers have supported the importance of teaching CSs such as Chen (1990), Kebir (1994), Dörnyei (1995), Salamone and Marsal (1997), Rossiter (2003), Lam (2004), Wen (2004), Nakatani (2005), Le (2006), Lin (2007), Huei-Chun (2012), and Majd (2014).

On the basis of the aforementioned statements, firstly, there is evidence that Iraqi EFL students have lacked to use the CSs in their oral communication. They also could not identify the appropriate CSs to be used when they lack the target intended words in oral communication. Secondly, Iraqi EFL students lacked to be fluent when they communicate orally in English. Thirdly, they lacked self-confidence to communicate orally in the target language. To solve all these problems, the researcher intends to teach those students some selected CSs which may help them to get effective oral communication in English and to be more fluent, more safe and confident while speaking English.

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The current study considers the following objectives:

1. To investigate whether the instruction of CSs could increase the frequency of non-taught CSs used by low, intermediate, and high proficient students.
2. To investigate whether the instruction of CSs could increase the frequency of taught CSs used by low, intermediate, and high proficient students.
3. To investigate whether the instruction of CSs could improve low, intermediate, and high proficient students' fluency.
4. To investigate whether the instruction of CSs could improve low, intermediate, and high proficient students' self-confidence.
5. To generate an instructional guide for CSs teaching purposes.



## **1.6 Research Questions**

This research tries to elicit and deal with the following questions:

1. Does the instruction of CSs increase the frequency of non- taught CSs used by low, intermediate, and high proficient students?
2. Does the instruction of CSs increase the frequency of taught CSs used by low, intermediate, and high proficient students?
3. Does the instruction of CSs improve the fluency of low, intermediate, and high proficient students?
4. Is there any significant difference in the self-confidence of low, intermediate, and high proficient students before and after the instruction of CSs?

## **1.7 Research Hypothesis**

This study examines the following null hypothesis:

Ho (1) There is no significant difference in the self-confidence of low, intermediate, and high proficient students before and after the instruction of CSs.

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

This study is based on the teaching of CSs to Iraqi EFL university students to investigate its effects on their strategy use, the relationship between instruction of CSs, proficiency level, and strategy use, to investigate the effects on Iraqi EFL students' fluency in an oral communication, and on their confidence in an oral communication.

It is hoped that the implications of the current study contribute to the pedagogy of English language education. If this study is proved to be effective in helping students to perform better in oral communication tasks, then CSs instruction may be promoted and implemented in Iraqi EFL curriculum. The results of this study is hoped to have important potential pedagogic implications in the local EFL context in particular and in the teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) context in general. It is also hoped that the materials of the current study could be used as a guide to teach CSs to Iraqi EFL students.

The results of this study may alert university teachers and students of English on how CSs important in improving the strategy use and to get familiar with CSs to communicate orally and effectively in the target language. Finally, the implications of this study may alert university teachers to be more creative in constructing interactive learning experiences for Iraqi EFL university students to help them build up their strategic competence, which finally leads to enhance their communication strategy (CS) use in oral communication.

Theoretically, it is hoped that this study could contribute to research of CS use. It could provide evidence for the teachability of CSs in the field of English language education. It is also hoped that TESOL researchers could continue looking into the importance of CSs from other aspects and conduct studies that could benefit TESOL students. Finally, this study is hoped to bridge the gap between theory and practice of CS use.

### **1.9 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

Although this research was carefully prepared, the researcher stills aware of its limitations and shortcomings. First of all, this study was conducted in the third year EFL class which have lasted for ten weeks. Ten weeks is not enough for the researcher to observe all of the students' speaking problems, use of CSs, fluency, and self-confidence in their classes. It was also not enough to provide them with much more information about the CSs and practice them in real situations. It would be better if it was done in a longer time.

Second, the sample of this study is small, only 50 EFL students and might not represent the majority of the EFL students of the tertiary level. A non-random or purposive sampling procedure decreases the generalizability of findings. This study will not be generalizable to all areas of EFL students in Iraq.

Third, since the oral test and the speaking task used to investigate the non-taught/ taught CSs used by Iraqi EFL students might give useful information regarding the use of these strategies; it seems not enough to investigate the students'

actual use of the whole CSs they already have in their repertoire or even the taught ones.

Fourth, the IELTS Speaking Test was used to investigate the students' fluency. It seems like an easy instrument for collecting data regarding the students' fluency, but in practice they can be difficult.

Fifth, questionnaire adapted to measure the students' self-confidence while communicating orally in the target language. The use of this questionnaire might give useful information about the students' self-confidence; it seems not to provide enough evidence of the students' actual self-confidence in the oral communication.

Finally, since the analysis of the pretest and posttest were conducted by the researcher himself, it is unavoidable that in this study, certain degree of subjectivity can be found. In fact, it would have been sort of objective if two or three examiners have done it.

In terms of delimitations, the current study is delimited to specific CSs stated in the taxonomies of Dörnyei and Scott's (1995) and Farrahi's (2011). These strategies are as follows:

1. The CSs adopted from Dörnyei and Scott's taxonomy (1995) could be identified as follows:
  - a. Interactional strategies namely: appeal for help, asking for clarification, and asking for confirmation
  - b. Indirect strategy namely: use of fillers
  - c. Direct strategies namely: approximation, message replacement, circumlocution, and literal translation
2. The CSs adopted from Farrahi's taxonomy (2011) could be identified as follows:
  - a. Avoidance strategy
  - b. Non- linguistics strategies (use of body gestures, use of pictures, paintings or drawings, use of at hand objects facilities or equipment)

This study is delimited to the interactional strategies, because they allow involving the learners in an interactional situation. According to Rabab'ah (2015), interactional strategies used in the Dörnyei and Scotts' taxonomy (1997) aim at helping language learners to negotiate meaning to get mutual understanding. He also concludes, "that interactional CS usage in second language communication enables language users to achieve their communicative goals, negotiate meaning, and improve their communicative ability" (p. 19). The direct, indirect, and non-linguistics strategies allow learners to use their efforts to work together through psychological processes to achieve communicative goal.

This study is also delimited only to teach oral CSs and focus only on their use in speaking task not in writing or reading. It is delimited only to English majors

students (third year)/ Department of English at a private university for the academic year session of 2016-2017. The researcher focuses on the third year student, because they have just finished two years of studying English, their availability, they have studied conversation for two years, and they would be graduated after one year. Finally, it focuses on students not teachers since this study is concerned with improving the students' communicative ability in speaking task.

## **1.10 Definitions of Basic Terms**

### **1.10.1 The Communication Strategies (CSs)**

There appears to be no agreements among researchers concerning the definitions of CSs. Corder (1977) defines the CSs as a systematic technique practiced by speaker during speaking tasks to express the intended meaning. Tarone (1980) defines CSs as a mutual attempt by two interlocutors in situations that appears to be no sharing of the intended meaning between them. According to Færch and Kasper (1983), CSs are conscious plans to solve problems that might face speakers to reach the intended meaning. According to Brown (2000 as cited in Hasan, 2015), CSs are techniques used by students to overcome problems in communication process. These problems may be related to their linguistic deficiency or they lack content knowledge of certain topics. Students use verbal and non-verbal strategies to keep the communication channel open. In this study, the researcher adopts verbal strategies such as indirect, direct, interactional, avoidance, and some non- linguistic strategies. Body gestures (nodding head or making shapes by hands, eye movements) as part of non- linguistic strategies, used in this study as non- verbal strategies.

The definition of CSs used in this study, is based on two perspectives, the interactional and psycholinguistic. Based on the interactional perspective, CSs are defined as “mutual attempts of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where the requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared” (Tarone, 1981, p. 288). On the other hand, psycholinguistic perspective defines CSs as “potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal” (Færch & Kasper, 1983, p. 36).

### **1.10.2 Taught Communication Strategies**

#### **1.10.2(a) Interactional CSs**

According to Dörnyei and Scotts (1995) interactional strategies use in situations when interlocutors try to make a mutual attempt to overcome the problems that could face them in their speaking or communication task in the target language. Using these kinds of CSs enable the interlocutors to carry out trouble-shooting exchanges cooperatively (e.g., direct appeal for help, comprehension check, asking for clarification). They are achieving mutual understanding and functioning as successful implementation of both pair parts of the exchange. The interactional strategies that have been used in the current study are appeal for help, asking for clarification, and asking for confirmation.

### **1.10.2(b) Direct CSs**

According to Dörnyei and Scotts (1995), learners use direct strategies in situations that there are limited linguistic resources to enhance their communication competence in the target language. They provide an alternative, manageable, and self-contained means of getting the meaning across, like circumlocution compensating for the lack of a word. The direct strategies that have been used in the current study are approximation strategy, message replacement strategy, circumlocution strategy, and literal translation strategy.

### **1.10.2(c) Indirect CSs**

According to Dörnyei and Scotts (1995), indirect strategies are used in situations when speakers want to make a mutual understanding with their interlocutors in the target language. Although they are not problem-solving devices and they do not provide alternative meaning structures, but rather facilitate the meaning transition indirectly by providing the conditions for achieving mutual understanding. They are preventing breakdowns and keeping the communication channel open (e.g., use of fillers, repetitions). These kinds of CSs play a significant role in problem management. The current study uses fillers strategy as an important kind of indirect strategies which helps speakers to gain time during communication breakdowns.



#### **1.10.2(d) Avoidance Strategy**

According Avval (2011), avoidance strategies are used by learners in situations when they try to avoid some structures or words of which they have lacked in the target language or they try to transfer the message in L2, but they face some difficulties to transfer the message in the target language. Richards and Schmidt (2002) refer to avoidance strategy as an attempt by which a speaker often tries to avoid using difficult word in the target language, and he/she uses an easiest one instead. The current study uses avoidance strategy which is used in Farrahi's taxonomy (2011) since it enables the learners to avoid their breakdowns in English.

#### **1.10.2(e) Non-Linguistics Strategies**

According Avval (2011) non-linguistics strategies are those strategies by which learners could use sounds, movements, objects, etc. to achieve mutual understanding. These kinds of CSs have nothing to do with words or other linguistic elements. When the learners do not know the name of an animal or anything else which have a specific sound, they try to make or imitate represented sounds to achieve understanding. Syamsudin (2016) states that non-linguistics strategies are very important to develop learners' speaking skill and to feel relax and comfortable while speaking in the target language. In this study the researcher uses non-linguistics strategies to be taught to Iraqi EFL students since they make the students feel confident in the target language.

### **1.10.3 Non-Taught Communication Strategies**

Non-taught CSs are the strategies which have not been taught to the participants in this study, but they used them in their oral communication. In this study, the researcher tries to find out the non-taught CSs used by Iraqi EFL students in their oral communication. He decides on the kinds of these strategies on the basis of the researcher experience in this field and also on the basis of the CSs used in some selected taxonomies of CSs such as the taxonomy of Færch and Kasper (1983), Dörnyei and Scott (1995), Rabab'ah (2001), and Farrahi (2011). For example "Use of all-purpose words," "Omission," "L1 slips and immediate insertion," "Use of similar-sounding words," "Reduction Strategies," "Achievement Strategies," "Exemplification," "Use of opposites or negatives."

### **1.10.7 Fluency**

Fluency is a flow of words in which they are joined together while a speaker speaking quickly (Cumming, 2003). It is a characteristic of the speaker. Tamo (2009) stated that "a person is a fluent speaker when he is capable of using the language structure accurately" (p. 31). Segalowitz (2010) calls speech fluency as "utterance fluency", which means the ability to produce meaningful strings of linguistic symbols in a largely uninterrupted fashion (Crystal, 1997; Götz, 2013). It is a speaker's an automatic procedural skill (Schmidt, 1992), where automaticity implies that in proficient speakers, little attention and effort are needed to produce fluent speech.

### **1.10.8 Self-Confidence**

Self-confidence is the key factor that helps learners to engage and take risks without fear of making mistakes in the target language. In general, this term (confidence) means totally trust in something. Lland (2013) defined, “Confidence originated from the Latin word "confidentia" meaning “to trust” and “to have faith” (p.11). Murray (2006) stated, “Confidence is defined in my dictionary as firm trust. If you are confident about something, you don't worry about its outcome, you just take it for granted that it will go well” (p.53). She also provided another definition of confidence, “Confidence is partly about skill, about knowing what to do and how to do it” (p.53).

### **1.11 Summary**

This chapter presents introduction of chapter one, background of the study, the education system in Iraq, statement of the problem, objective of the study, research questions, research hypothesis, followed by significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study, definitions of the basic terms related to the current study and summary of this chapter.